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ENCIRCLEMENT

By J. L. BRIERLEY



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ON WORLD AFFAIRS

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BY
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THE formation of a peace front to resist aggression in Europe has caused an outcry in Germany against a so-called policy of 'encirclement'. This pamphlet contrasts similar protests made in pre-war years with those in the present situation, points out the reality of 'encirclement', describes how nearly all European countries are, in fact, 'encircled', and deals with such problems as *Lebensraum* in its political sense.

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ENCIRCLEMENT

WHAT do Germans mean when they complain that Britain is pursuing an *Einkreisungspolitik*, a policy of 'encirclement' towards them? or that we are trying to deny them the *Lebensraum*, the 'living space', to which they, as a great people, have a right? Is there any truth in these charges against us, and, if so, how do we defend what we are doing?

We know, both from the speeches of the German leaders and from the abuse which is showered upon us by the Press which they control, that the German Government desires the German people to believe that these charges are true. In the speech which he made before the Reichstag on 28 April last, the speech in which he defended his action in destroying the independence of Czechoslovakia, Herr Hitler used both these catchwords to drive home his attack on British policy.

'I am now compelled to state,' he said, 'that the policy of England is both unofficially and officially leaving no doubt about the fact that such a conviction [*sc.* the conviction that an Anglo-German war would never again be possible] is no longer shared in London, and that, on the contrary, the opinion prevails there that no matter in what conflict Germany should some day be entangled, Great Britain would always have to take her stand against Germany. Thus a war against Germany is taken for granted in that country. . . . I have never advanced a claim which might in any way have interfered with

ENCIRCLEMENT

British interests or have become a danger to the Empire and thus have meant any kind of damage to England. I have always kept within the limit of such demands as are intimately connected with Germany's living space and thus the eternal property of the German nation. Since England to-day, both through the press and officially upholds the view that Germany should be opposed under all circumstances, and confirms this by the policy of encirclement known to us, the basis for the Naval Treaty [*sc.* the Treaty of 1935] has been removed.'

The Urgency of the Question

What makes it so urgent for us to understand these apprehensions which Germans profess to feel to-day is that there is a grave danger that this propaganda may succeed in leading the German people as a whole to believe that peace is endangered to-day by the hostile attitude of their neighbours, and not, as we know to be the case, by the aggressions and the bad faith of their own government. Such a conviction in German minds would be an immeasurable calamity. For even in these days of authoritarian governments, whenever the issue of peace or war is in the balance as it is to-day, the opinion of ordinary men and women about the merits of the cause for which they may be asked to face the horrors of a war is of vital importance; it is, in fact, far more important than it was in the past. It has become more important because a totalitarian war can

ENCIRCLEMENT

hardly be waged at all, and certainly cannot be waged for long, unless these ordinary peacefully inclined people can be induced to support it, practically unanimously, with all the energies and all the resources at their command; and before these ordinary people will give this support, they must have come to believe that war is being forced upon them, that it is not being wantonly provoked by their own government. This limiting factor on the power of a government to lead its people into war applies with equal force to dictatorships and to democracies; in time of war both have to rely on a popular support so whole-hearted and so complete that, except within narrow limits, it cannot be exacted by the methods by which dictatorial governments impose their will in normal times. Where, however, dictatorships and democracies do differ in this matter is in respect of the ease with which they can suppress the true facts of a situation and impose upon their peoples the belief that war is being forced upon them by the machinations of the other side; and that explains the special danger in which we stand at present.

Last September, at the time of Mr. Chamberlain's visit to Munich, the demeanour of the German men and women who turned out into the streets to acclaim him is reported to have

ENCIRCLEMENT

proved beyond any doubt that Germans then were for the most part no less anxious to see peace preserved than we are ourselves; to many of us the evidence of this common desire for peace shared by both peoples seemed the one glimmer of hope left over from those tragic days. There is no reason to suppose that Germans are less anxious for peace to-day than they were last year, and yet we may take it as certain that if they come to believe that they are being ringed round by jealous hostile States bent on their destruction, they will steel themselves to face the sacrifices even of a war which they detest. We in this country may know with absolute certainty, we may even be puzzled to understand how any one can doubt, that, as the Prime Minister said in the House of Commons on 8 June last, 'any suggestion that we wish to isolate Germany, or to stand in the way of natural and legitimate extension of her trade, or to plan some combination against her with the idea of making war upon her, is fantastic.' But what we must realize is that *Einkreisung* and *Lebensraum* are slogans highly charged with emotional content, and that both make their appeal to the most primitive and unreasoning of all the emotions, that of fear. Both evoke the same terrifying picture of implacable enemies, pressing on their victim

ENCIRCLEMENT

from every side, and bent on choking the life out of his body; if once a nation has been persuaded that this is its predicament, it is more likely to ask itself only how it can escape from the trap by any means that may be at hand, than calmly to examine the question whether it was its own leaders or the jealous outside world that set the trap for it. Here, for instance, is a typical extract from a popular German newspaper which shows the response which all this propaganda about 'encirclement' is intended to evoke in German minds:

'Great Britain is trying to encircle Germany with a new chain. You may deny this or not. The British attempts to try out the Versailles Encirclement policy again are continually reaching a clearer and more definite form. Mr. Chamberlain's most beautiful peace phrases and the cleverest Foreign Office word-twisting will not help to change this fact. Great Britain should therefore be told once more quite clearly what the Führer already stated. . . . Germany is certainly not inclined to watch the British efforts inactively. She is not willing to suffer the same fate which this British encirclement policy prepared for pre-war Germany.'

'Encirclement' before 1914

The reference to pre-War history in the last words here illustrates one of the devices which is being used to add to the persuasive force of the propaganda. If Britain's policy towards Germany can be represented as merely a con-

ENCIRCLEMENT

tinuation of, or a return to, a policy which she has pursued towards Germany once before with bitter results for Germany, it becomes easier to believe in its malevolence to-day. What, then, are the facts of our pre-War relations with Germany, so far as they touch this question?

It is believed that a speech delivered in the Reichstag by von Bülow, then German Chancellor, on 14 November 1906, contained the first public use of the word to describe the situation of Germany in relation to other Powers. That he ever really persuaded himself to believe that the charge of 'encirclement' had any truth in relation to British policy is very unlikely; at any rate, he had before him the repeated and emphatic assurances of successive German Ambassadors in London that it had not. We know, too, from documents which have now been published and whose purport should be known to Germans as well as to us, that Bülow quite deliberately decided to use the charge of 'encirclement' against us in order to overcome the resistance of the German people to the successive expansions of the German Navy which the Kaiser and von Tirpitz had determined to have carried out. In this he was brilliantly successful. Journalists, writers of books, politicians, university

ENCIRCLEMENT

professors, prominent soldiers, poured out year after year a never-ceasing stream of propaganda, and the Navy Bills were passed into law. When war came in 1914 the ground had been so thoroughly prepared that the German nation was practically unanimous in believing that here was the culminating event of a policy long and implacably pursued by Germany's enemies, and by Britain in particular. The Kaiser's *cri de cœur*, when he realized that Britain would join in the war against Germany, has often been quoted, and there is no doubt that it represented the passionate conviction of the German people.

'So the famous encirclement of Germany has now finally become an accomplished fact, despite every effort of our politicians and diplomatists to prevent it. The net has been suddenly thrown over our head, and England sneeringly reaps the most brilliant success of the purely anti-German world policy, which she has persistently pursued and against which we have shown ourselves helpless, as she twists the noose of our political and economic destruction out of our loyalty to Austria, while we squirm isolated in the net. A brilliant achievement which arouses the admiration even of him who is to be destroyed as a result! Edward VII is stronger after his death than I who am still alive.'

That the foreign policy of Britain before the War, whatever it may have been, was the personal policy of King Edward VII is of course

ENCIRCLEMENT

wholly untrue, and no one with even an elementary understanding of the British political system could have believed it. But in fact the whole story of a British *Einkreisungspolitik* before the War is a myth. That Britain deliberately worked for war with Germany because she was alarmed by Germany's growing commercial rivalry is a charge which almost disproves itself when made against a commercial people; a 'nation of shopkeepers' is not so silly as to imagine that even the most successful war can be good for its trade. Britain was driven ever closer to France and then to France's ally Russia in the pre-War years by one thing and one thing alone, by her fear of Germany's intentions; it was Germany's restlessness, her sabre-rattling at one international crisis after another, and above all her naval expansion (which seemed explicable only on the theory that the greatest military Power aspired to become also the greatest naval Power in the world), that welded the Triple Entente together. Even so, so deep-rooted was our detestation of the thought of war with Germany, that it was not until after war had actually begun that France and Russia knew for certain that we should be on their side.

ENCIRCLEMENT

The ' War-guilt ' Propaganda

Most Englishmen have probably assumed that just as we ourselves in retrospect are now prepared to admit that we exaggerated Germany's responsibility in the emotional stress of the War, so Germans, after the lapse of a quarter of a century, would now be able to examine the evidence of its causes dispassionately and to revise their views. That, however, is not the case. For since the War the myth of a British pre-War *Einkreisungspolitik* has become the instrument of a new propaganda, that against the so-called 'war-guilt' of Germany. The aim of this propaganda has been to bring about the reversal of the Versailles settlement by destroying what is supposed to be the treaty's only basis, the alleged sole responsibility of Germany for the War. Not only was Germany not *solely* responsible, according to this new myth, she was not responsible at all; on the contrary she was the perfectly innocent victim of a nefarious conspiracy, to the success of which all her post-War difficulties have been due. The vehemence with which this campaign has been carried on in the Press, in the universities, and perhaps most important of all, in the schools, and the vast sums of money that have been spent on it, have received little

ENCIRCLEMENT

attention in this country. In so far as British people have been aware of it at all, they have been inclined, from a very genuine sympathy with German difficulties, to say that it was not unnatural for Germans to wish to salve their wounds and to restore their self-respect by minimizing their own share in causing the War and exaggerating that of their ex-enemies. We have believed that with the healing passage of time, the revival of German prosperity, and the recognition of any legitimate grievances that they might have, this mood of exaggeration would pass harmlessly away. We know now that in this hope we were mistaken. The 'war-guilt' propaganda has very effectively prepared the minds of the great mass of the German people to receive the new charges against us in which they are now being told to believe.

'Encirclement' since 15 March 1939

British 'encirclement' of Germany before the War was a myth deliberately invented. But the 'encirclement' with which we are charged to-day is not a myth in the same sense. Before the War facts were invented or distorted to support the charge; to-day there is no real difference between the Germans and ourselves as regards the *facts* to which the new charge relates, so long as these are considered simply

ENCIRCLEMENT

as facts. Where we differ is in the interpretation of facts which we admit. In our view 'encirclement' is a misleading and tendencious word to apply to those facts, but, subject to that qualification, we do not deny, we justify, the 'encirclement' of Germany to-day.

Since the invasion of Czechoslovakia on 15 March last, Britain has been building up what *we* call a 'peace front'. We have allied ourselves with France and Poland and Turkey; we have guaranteed the independence of Roumania and Greece; we are negotiating for an alliance with Russia; we are spending vast sums of money on our own armaments, and we are using our financial strength to encourage the States with whom we are associated to strengthen theirs. All these things are facts; we do not deny them, on the contrary we want them to be known and their meaning understood. Nor do we deny that the object of these preparations is, firstly to deter Germany from going to war, and secondly, if we fail in that part of our purpose, to ensure that she shall be defeated. 'Encirclement', therefore, if this is what Germans mean by the term, and we know that it is, is certainly no 'myth' to-day, and it would not only be useless, it would be untrue to defend our actions by saying that they are intended to put Germany in no danger. Their

ENCIRCLEMENT

whole purpose is to create a very real danger for Germany—in *certain events*, and if we tell Germans that the danger they foresee is imaginary we shall in fact be telling them the very opposite of what we want them to believe.

On the other hand, when Germans describe our policy towards them as 'encirclement', we have a right to point out that they are using a tendentious word. In that, of course, lies its propaganda value. They are using a word which, though it may be taken on the face of it to be merely a somewhat rhetorical description of a state of facts, suggests, and is intended to suggest, associated ideas of two kinds: it suggests that there is a conspiracy of Powers bent on manœuvring Germany into a specially dangerous position in which she does not attempt to place any of them, that she is being unfairly singled out for a peculiarly hard fate, and it suggests that the motive of this conspiracy is the jealous determination of others to thwart her legitimate development, and not the fear that she has aroused by her own provocative actions. Both these notions which the word 'encirclement' is intended to evoke are false, and in that sense it is still true to say that the 'encirclement' of Germany is a 'myth'. For the truth is that Germany's danger, so far from being of a kind to which she alone is

ENCIRCLEMENT

exposed, is a danger in which many other States stand in the present condition of Europe, and that it is a danger which her own actions have provoked. These are the facts which constitute the real and the sufficient justification of British policy towards Germany to-day.

Encirclement by Germany

Many of the States of Europe are to-day 'encircled.' For Europe to-day contains two groups of Powers, of which it is unfortunately only too true to say, in the words of the seventeenth-century philosopher Hobbes, that they are 'in continual jealousies, and in the state and posture of gladiators, having their weapons pointing and their eyes fixed on one another,' and this, as Hobbes goes on to say, is a 'posture of war'. Each of these groups is trying to strengthen its position relatively to the other by every means open to it in the hope, in the first place, of making its will prevail without actual war, and in the second place, if war should come, of ensuring victory for its own side. Both groups are to this extent acting in precisely the same way, and it is merely an accident of geography that makes it plausible for one, the Axis Powers, to stigmatize the action of the other as 'encirclement'. The Axis Powers happen to be geographically contiguous to one another and to lie

ENCIRCLEMENT

in the centre of Europe, whereas Britain, France and Poland are not contiguous but divided, Britain and France to the west, and Poland to the east, of the Axis. Actually this central position of the Axis Powers, so far from being a weakness of which the other group is taking an unfair advantage, would, in the event of war, be a great source to them of military strength. In any case Germany, or Germany and Italy together, are far from being the only 'encircled' Powers. So long as the European States form, not a concert, but two rival groups, the facts of geography make it inevitable that situations should arise in which States may plausibly, sometimes far more plausibly than Germany in her present position, regard themselves as 'encircled'. Even a cursory glance at the political map of Europe to-day shows that Germany and Italy are themselves the great 'encirclers'. Since the seizures of Czechoslovakia and the Memelland Germany herself is encircling Poland: since the seizure of Albania, Germany and Italy together with Hungary and possibly Bulgaria, are encircling Yugoslavia; last September Germany joined with Poland and Hungary to encircle and actually to partition Czechoslovakia; and of the Great Powers to-day the one that has the best right to complain of 'encirclement' is not

ENCIRCLEMENT

Germany, but France, for, thanks to the successful aggression of the Axis Powers in Spain, France is now ringed round by three members of the Anti-Comintern Pact. *Einkreisungspolitik* is thus no monopoly of an anti-German group of Powers.

The Justification of British Policy

But in the British view there is a vital distinction between our 'encirclement' of Germany and the 'encirclements' of other States of which Germany is the chief author. 'We admit,' we might say, 'that we are taking certain action towards you which you call "encirclement". We do not admit that that is a fair description of what we are doing, but let that pass; in any case we may remind you that you yourselves are taking very similar action towards France and towards a number of other countries in whose safety we are interested. The vital difference, however, between what *we* are doing and what *you* are doing is that our measures are defensive; we have every reason to fear that *you*, unless you are prevented, intend to impose your will on other independent nations by force, and we are therefore building up a "peace front" against you. *You*, on the other hand, have no reason to entertain any such suspicion with regard to *our* intentions,

ENCIRCLEMENT

and *your* preparations therefore can have only an offensive purpose. If by any chance we have misunderstood your intentions, or if you decide to change them and behave like a good neighbour, you have nothing whatever to fear from our preparations, because in either of those cases none of the engagements into which we have entered will ever come into operation.'

What, then, is the evidence by which we might justify some such explanation of our attitude as this? The evidence on which our belief in Germany's future aggressive intentions rests comes from various sources, and its cumulative effect is overwhelming. But the position, put quite shortly, is simply this: that for some years now Germany has been setting the pace in a race of armament-building, that she has subordinated every other consideration of her economy to the creation of an army and an air force of unprecedented strength, and that when we ask whether, as she would have us believe, these preparations threaten no one, there are only two sources to which we can look for the answer: (1) the uses to which she has hitherto put her strength, and (2) the statements made on her behalf of the aims for which she needs this strength.

(1) Germany's own acts under the National-Socialist régime show that she claims the right

ENCIRCLEMENT

to decide unilaterally for herself any question in which she is interested, and that no reliance whatever can be placed on her most solemn pledges. Only a small selection from the voluminous evidence on this point can here be given.

On 17 May 1933, in the first year of his Chancellorship, Herr Hitler said in a speech before the Reichstag:

'Germany does not wish to take any other path than that recognized as justified by the treaties themselves. The German Government wishes to come to a peaceful agreement with other nations on all difficult questions. They know that in any military action in Europe, even if completely successful, the sacrifice would be out of all proportion to any possible gains.' (Documents in International Affairs, 1933, p. 207.)

A Reichstag speech of 21 May 1935 is a veritable museum of pledges since broken. In it these passages occur:

'National-Socialism regards the forcible amalgamation of one people with another alien people not only as a worthless political aim, but, in the long run, as a danger to the internal unity, and hence the strength, of a nation.'

'Germany neither intends nor wishes to interfere in the internal affairs of Austria, to annex Austria, or to conclude an Anschluss.'

'The German Government will unconditionally respect the articles [of the Treaty of Versailles] concerning the mutual relations of the nations in other respects [sc. other than the matter of disarmament], including the territorial provisions, and those revisions which shall be rendered necessary in course of time will be put into effect only by the method of peaceful understanding.'

ENCIRCLEMENT

'In respecting the demilitarized zone the German Government consider their action as a contribution to the appeasement of Europe, which contribution is of an unheard-of hardness for a sovereign state.' (Ibid., 1935, vol. I, 160, 171, 172.)

On 6 March 1936 Germany occupied the demilitarized zone without warning.

On 11 July 1936 the text was issued of an agreement between Germany and Austria, of which the first two articles were these:

(1) *'In the sense of the statement made by the Führer and Reich Chancellor on 21 May 1935, the German Government recognises the full sovereignty of the Federal State of Austria.'*

(2) *'Each of the two governments shall regard the internal political conditions of the other country, including the question of Austrian National Socialism, as a domestic concern of that country, upon which it will exert neither direct nor indirect influence.'* (Ibid., 1936, p. 320.)

In a Reichstag speech of 30 January 1937 Herr Hitler thanked providence that he had been able to bring to a successful issue the struggle for the restoration of German honour and rights. He regretted that it had not been possible to carry through the necessary measures by way of negotiation, but, he added, *'As all this has now been accomplished, the so-called period of surprises has come to an end.'* (Ibid. 1937, p. 161.)

On 12 February 1938 the recognition of Austrian sovereignty contained in the agreement of 1936 was reaffirmed after the visit of Herr von Schuschnigg to Herr Hitler at

ENCIRCLEMENT

Berchtesgaden. '*Both parties,*' said the official communiqué, '*are resolved to keep to the principles of that agreement and regard it as the starting point for a satisfactory development of their relations.*' Actually it is now known that Herr von Schuschnigg had been forced to make a humiliating surrender to demands utterly inconsistent with this statement.

On 11 March 1938 the German troops invaded Austria and annexed it.

On 13 March 1938 the German Government gave an assurance to the Czech Government that Germany had no aggressive designs against Czechoslovakia.¹

On 26 September 1938, in a speech at the Sports' Palace at Berlin demanding the cession of the Sudetenland, Herr Hitler declared that this was '*the last territorial claim which I have to make in Europe, but it is the claim from which I do not recede and which I shall fulfil, God willing.*' Three days later the Czechoslovak Government was forced to accept the Munich terms of surrender.²

At Saarbrücken, 9 October 1938, Herr Hitler admitted he had reached the determination to bring back to the Reich the 10,000,000 Germans who stood apart from us *at the*

¹ *The Times*, 26 September 1938.

² *The Times*, 27 September 1938.

ENCIRCLEMENT

beginning of this year (that is to say, before the assurances above-mentioned solemnly given to Austria and to Czechoslovakia).¹

On 15 March 1939 the Germans occupied what Munich had left of Czechoslovakia. It was not until after this event that Britain turned to the policy which Germans call 'encirclement'.

Lebensraum

(2) Herr Hitler in *Mein Kampf*² has explained with complete candour that he regards a vast territorial expansion as necessary for Germany's future, and that this expansion must be secured, if necessary, by the sword. His views on this matter are so important, both for understanding the policy he has hitherto pursued and for forecasting the policy he is likely to attempt in future, that it is necessary to examine them in some detail. It is significant that in only one respect, that of the worthlessness of colonies, has he since shown the slightest sign of having changed his views, and there we have seen an extension, and not an attenuation, of his programme.

The primary purpose of a foreign policy

¹ *The Times*, 10 October 1938.

² For a more detailed account of the doctrines of *Mein Kampf* see Oxford Pamphlet No. 3, in this series, by R. C. K. Ensor. The quotations which follow are taken from the German edition of 1933.

ENCIRCLEMENT

according to Herr Hitler, is to secure the existence of the race by establishing a healthy and natural proportion between the numbers of the population and the extent and resources of their territory. It is a cardinal point in Herr Hitler's philosophy that this 'healthy' proportion is one in which the maintenance of the people is guaranteed by the resources of their own soil. 'Never consider the Reich as made secure,' he says, 'unless, for centuries to come, it can give to every descendant of our people his own piece of ground and soil. Never forget that the holiest right in this world is the right to the earth which a man wishes to cultivate for himself, and that the holiest sacrifice is the blood which he sheds for this earth' (p. 754.) He has an unbounded contempt for a mainly industrial civilization; industry and commerce, he thinks, should take a subordinate place in the national economy, for the only true basis of a community is a healthy peasant class.

Over and over again Herr Hitler insists that for Germany at present this desirable proportion between her population and their territory does not exist; it must be the objective of the Nazi movement to establish it. And note the magnitude of this task as he conceives it. Germany needs more territory for two reasons which are cumulative in their effect;

ENCIRCLEMENT

she needs it, because her present population is not properly distributed between town and country, and she needs it because her population is going to increase in the future. Herr Hitler assumes a present annual increase of population of about 900,000. German foreign policy should proceed on the basis that a century hence 'there will be 250 million Germans living on this Continent, not packed together as factory coolies of the rest of the world, but as peasants and workers who mutually guarantee one another the means of life through what they produce' (p. 767.)

For an examination of this estimate of the probable future German population the reader may be referred to Dr. Kuczynski's pamphlet '*Living Space*' and *Population Problems* in this series. The estimate is, in fact, so fantastically improbable that if *Lebensraum* were a merely rational construction, we might confidently expect that the conclusions of science would succeed in demonstrating the slenderness of the basis on which it rests. Unfortunately *Lebensraum* makes its appeal far more to the emotions than to the reason, and we must assume that it will survive the destruction of its demographical foundation.

In theory, Herr Hitler thinks there are four different means by which this dispropor-

ENCIRCLEMENT

tion between German population and German territory in which he believes might be rectified (ibid., Part I, ch. iv.): (1) birth control, but this he rejects as leading to racial degeneration; (2) internal colonization, by which he means extending the system of small holdings, but this, though a tempting way out to a people of the 'pacifist disposition' of the Germans, could never assure the future of the nation without the acquisition of more territory; (3) increased concentration on the export trade, which would increase the present disproportion between town and country life; and (4) the acquisition of new territory, the only tolerable solution. Germany, he says, must become a *Weltmacht*, a 'world-power', which she is not to-day and never will be, however militarily powerful she may become, so long as this disproportion between size of population and territorial area continues to exist (p. 729).

Herr Hitler's vindication of Germany's right to new territory reveals one of the fundamental, and also one of the most alarming, of the bases of his programme, his conception of the Germans as a superior race. In striving to carry out its policy of territorial expansion, National Socialism, he says, must bear in mind that Germans are guardians of the highest form of
at they have therefore

ENCIRCLEMENT

a correspondingly high duty to guard the purity of German blood (p. 732). The lesson of the past is that German policy should have a two-fold aim, 'ground and soil' for its aim in foreign policy, and a new and simplified foundation for domestic policy, corresponding to the German outlook on life. He pours contempt on any who would criticize this policy on ethical grounds. To prate of territorial expansion as a 'violation of the sacred rights of man' is to play the game of Germany's enemies, and serves only to destroy the will of Germans to promote their own vital interests by the only effective means they have, the power of the triumphant sword. Existing political frontiers, which are merely the product of the political struggles of the past, should be no deterrent to Germany; 'no people on this earth occupies a square yard of ground and soil under a higher Will or in virtue of a higher Right. . . . State frontiers are made by men and men may alter them.' When without it a great nation would be destined to go under, the right to an extension of territory becomes a duty; and that is particularly true 'when the question relates not to some wretched little negro people, but to the Germanic mother of all the life which has given cultural shape to the world of to-day' (p. 741.)

ENCIRCLEMENT

About the application of these principles to the existing European situation Herr Hitler is quite specific. The restoration of the 1914 frontiers would be absurd, even criminally absurd. Those frontiers were utterly illogical; they were not complete, because they did not include all members of the German nation, and they were not reasonable from the point of view of military defence. They were merely temporary frontiers established in a political struggle which had not been finished. Nor must there be a return to the pre-War colonial policy; though here, as we saw before, we come upon the one point of foreign policy in which Herr Hitler has since departed from the doctrines of *Mein Kampf*. The territorial policy of the future must turn towards the East and look to Russia and the border States subject to her. Here Destiny itself points the German way; for Russia, having abolished its Germanic ruling class and having fallen under the Jewish yoke, is ripe for dissolution. German policy must be an Eastern policy, having in view the acquisition of the land necessary for the German people (p. 757.)

This brief examination of the most authentic of the sources of the *Lebensraum* claim may serve to dispose of one misunderstanding of its character that is common among Englishmen,

ENCIRCLEMENT

the belief that the claim is first and foremost an economic one. At a time when Germany is so short of labour for her industry and her agriculture that she is importing thousands of foreign workmen from any country from which they can be drawn, she clearly cannot complain of over-population in the ordinary economic or demographic meaning of that term. In his great speech of 29 June last Lord Halifax declared, as British statesmen have many times declared before, that we are ready to co-operate 'in extending to all nations the opportunity of a larger economic life, with all that this means, which is implied in the term *Lebensraum*.' But the dynamic element in the *Lebensraum* claim is not economic, but political, and other passages in Lord Halifax's speech show that he at least is well aware of this. No doubt the economic difficulties of Germany serve to commend the claim to the sympathies of the ordinary German man or woman; it is convenient for a government to attribute the hardships of which Germans are conscious in their daily lives to the nefarious attempts of the outside world at the economic strangulation of Germany, especially when these hardships are largely the outcome of the policy that that government has deliberately chosen to follow. But we shall be making a dangerous miscalcu-

ENCIRCLEMENT

lation of the probable future trend of events, and we shall be unlikely to choose the best way of meeting them, if we fail to realize the fundamentally political character of the *Lebensraum* claim. Certainly Herr Hitler has been perfectly frank about it, and the contempt with which all our offers of a *rapprochement* on the economic plane have consistently been met shows the insufficiency of the economic interpretation which the word taken literally would seem to suggest.

We need not, however, rely only on what Germans tell us, not even on what Herr Hitler himself tells us, is the meaning of *Lebensraum* in the abstract; we can learn what it means by noting how it is put into operation as an actual policy. In Herr Hitler's speech to the Reichstag of 28 April last he had the difficult task of explaining to the German people and to the world at large how the seizure of Czechoslovakia could be reconciled with his own racial principles and with his own previous pledges. His defence is extremely instructive. 'I have always,' he said, 'kept within the limit of such demands as are intimately connected with Germany's living space, and thus the eternal property of the German nation.' And later in the same speech, to show how fully Germany understood and sympathized with

ENCIRCLEMENT

the seizure of Albania by Italy, Herr Hitler described that country as 'living space undoubtedly allotted to Italy by nature and history'. Without this illuminating example the student of German mentality might have supposed that the German claim for *Lebensraum* envisaged an ordering of the world and a division of its territory in which *all* peoples would enjoy the highest attainable facilities for the good life, and that if 'nature and history' have allotted a certain *Lebensraum* to Germany, they may equally well be supposed to have allotted one to the Czechs and another to the Albanians. But evidently this is not so, and Herr Hitler has told us why. It is because the Germans are a superior race, and 'nature and history' ordain that their needs, or what they themselves decide to be their needs, must come first.

Might the Policy become Offensive?

One last criticism of British policy which has recently been made by a German writer to a British newspaper must here be mentioned. It is that the line between defensive and offensive preparations is not a clear one, and that a policy honestly intended at the outset to be defensive may easily be turned by the course of events into one of offence. That in the

ENCIRCLEMENT

abstract is true. The League system, from which Germany broke away, would have secured for her a *joint* consideration of any circumstance 'which threatens to disturb international peace'; as it is, it is true that we must decide for ourselves, or in consultation with the Powers associated with us, whether or not any future action by Germany is of a kind to justify the putting into effect against her of the preparations we are making. In so far as we can foresee the course which events are likely to take, we can do something to meet this difficulty by defining beforehand, as clearly as possible, the circumstances in which we intend to act. The Prime Minister's speech of 10 July last has done this so far as the question which is immediately pressing is concerned, namely, that of Danzig. 'Recent events in Danzig,' he said, 'have inevitably given rise to fears that it is intended to settle her future status by unilateral action, organized by surreptitious methods, thus presenting Poland and other Powers with a *fait accompli*. In such circumstances, any action taken by Poland to restore the situation, would, it is suggested, be represented as an act of aggression on her part, and if her action were supported by other Powers they would be accused of aiding and abetting her in the use of force.' In such a

ENCIRCLEMENT

case, he went on to say, an issue affecting Polish national existence and independence would be raised, and 'we have guaranteed to give our assistance to Poland in the case of a clear threat to her independence, which she considers it vital to resist with her national forces, and we are firmly resolved to carry out this undertaking.'

Lord Halifax's speech of 29 June contained both an assurance and a warning. 'None of this formidable array of strength will be called into play,' he said, 'except in defence against aggression'; but 'in the event of further aggression we are resolved to use at once the whole of our strength in fulfilment of our pledges to resist it.' 'Defence' and 'aggression' are words which may be difficult to define in the abstract. But it is not easy to believe, either that the German Government is in any doubt that our policy will remain in fact, as it is in intention, one of 'defence against aggression', or that it does not know exactly what sort of action Lord Halifax had in mind when he used those words.

